

THE LETTER
"P"

By J. J. aBECKET

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Young Mr. Carlisle Partridge possessed an ample income and an extraordinary talent for the piano. His ambition to be a celebrated performer occupied much of his thought and time. Unfortunately, just as he reached the point where he felt warranted in appearing as a professor of his health began to show signs of failing. His physician advised change of air and less arduous practice.

Partridge sought out a beautiful country town whose air was invigorating. He engaged a large front room and the use of a rear one, which was a sort of country back parlor. In the former he had a grand piano installed and restricted his use of it to three hours a day, practicing only the numbers for his programme.

The small community was much impressed by this exhibition of opulence and energy. So was the daughter of his ladyship, a girl of eighteen. Hetty Humphreys was a bright and exceedingly pretty girl, who had already made her mark in the little village world by her standing at the academy. Her mother planned for her a higher flight at Holyoke college.

After a few days the girl's interest in the handsome young musician deepened. She would spend nearly all of the evening hour for practice in the bay window, which looked out on the large garden. A honeysuckle vine clambered thickly around this window, whose ledge was only a few feet from the ground. Off a little at one side was a vineclad arbor.

"Do you mind if I sit in the window of the back parlor and hear you play?" she asked. "You do play so beautifully, and of course we get so little music of any kind here that it's a real treat and an education for me. I'm too busy the rest of the day to give it attention."

Mr. Partridge had assented, with the proviso that she should not speak to him until the hour was over. Hetty promised, and when the thing was tried he found that she was as good as her word. In fact, when he had made some remark to her the first night she had not replied. He was so nearsighted that he could not see well into the dark opening of the window. It was not until he had closed the piano and made another remark that he received any response.

"Tired? No, indeed, but it makes me feel so dreamy I don't want to say a word."

This was as good as could be. So the rehearsals went on through the



EVERY EVENING SHE SAT IN THE BACK PARLOR WHILE HE PLAYED.

lovely summer evenings, the musician feeling a sort of stimulus from his unwearying but silent auditor. Then came a ripple in the placid current of his rustic experience. One morning after he had finished his practice Mrs. Humphreys requested a moment of speech with him. He assented, wondering what she could want. She was the incarnation of prose and country respectability of the narrow but instant sort.

"I've got to say something to you, Mr. Partridge. It isn't very nice to have to mention it. But, though Hetty is smart, she's only a girl and only used to country ways. She used to like to visit with friends nights, but now she don't show no disposition to do so. It may be the music, and that's all. But she's changed since you came. She's moody at times and then again kind of giddy and excited. I've watched you, and I can see that you don't take more than ordinary notice of Het. But when I found this in her room yesterday it made me do some thinking, and I made up my mind it was time to speak to you. Look at that!"

She unfolded a white cloth and showed a square of deep yellow silk with several bars of music embroidered in each corner. In the middle a large "P" was outlined in the same black silk.

Mr. Partridge took the square, examined the musical bars and nodded his head. Then he looked at Mrs. Humphreys with a mildly inquisitive air.

"You seem to know them musical figures," said she severely. "Have they got any meaning?"

"Why, yes. This is from a Scotch ballad. 'Could you come back to me, Douglas, Douglas?' He sang the words softly. 'This is from 'Carmen.' He sang again 'Si tu m'aimes, Escamillo.' Then this is from 'The Bedouin's Love Song.' The last is a passage from 'A Pastoral Symphony' I practice."

The ingenuous young man reddened under the sustained gaze of Hetty's mother.

"It's not just fancy in me," she declared. "That poor child's in love."

"Well, that isn't such a dreadful thing. Mrs. Humphreys, is it? Miss Hetty is about eighteen or nineteen, and girls usually do fall in love about that time."

"I'm not blaming you. But you don't mean to say that you have any serious

feelings for my daughter, do you, Mr. Partridge?" She spoke with a red face, but fierce determination.

"Good heavens, no!" exclaimed the musician, with an explosive emphasis that carried conviction. "What—what have I to do with it?"

She put her forefinger on the large funeral "P." "P stands for Partridge, don't it?"

He flushed with annoyance, but there was no gainsaying that it did.

"It must all be a mistake," he protested. "I never see her alone except when she is around when I play evenings, and I don't see her then. She likes to listen quietly and then go away. I am perfectly innocent."

Her expression had softened, though she still looked worried. "I don't blame you, Mr. Partridge, but you can see that it must be stopped."

He did some quick thinking. "I can go away. I meant to stay two weeks longer, but I can get off in a day or two."

Three days later Hetty drove him to the station. Her mother could not oppose this last devotion. She saw him on the train. "I am ever so much obliged for those lovely evenings of music," she said cheerfully. She likes to listen quietly and then go away. I am perfectly innocent."

He hesitated a moment and then said, "I would really like to have the sofa pillow, Miss Hetty."

She looked at him open eyed, then asked quickly, "How did you know anything about it?"

"Oh, I saw it one day," he replied evasively. "I know all the airs, of course, but I shouldn't have guessed it was for me only for the 'P'."

She burst into a merry fit of laughter. "Did mother show that to you? Upon my word, that wasn't for you!" And she laughed again.

"Oh, pardon me!" But the train pulled up, and he was off.

It had not disappeared when a young fellow came out of the waiting room, and the two drove briskly away.

"George," she said, "that Princeton pillow I made for you mother and Mr. Partridge thought I had made for him."

"Well, there's no harm in that," he laughed back. "If he had only known what a good blind his playing was for those evenings in the arbor, he wouldn't have any suspicions like that. But we've got to hurry to get to the other station. The minister is expecting us in New Haven."

"Oh, George, mother will be surprised! Do you suppose your father will forgive us?"

"If he doesn't, I can stand it, Hetty, dear."

The Barometer Trees of Chile.

One of the most remarkable productions of the isles of Chile is the celebrated "barometer tree," which grows in great profusion in all of the salt marshes. It belongs to the natural order euphorbiaceae, and is believed to be a near relative of Siphonia elastica, the India rubber tree of Brazil. The wonderful traits of this tree were first made known to white men in 1881, the natives informing the De Young company that both the leaves and the bark of the trees were never failing weather prognosticators. In dry weather the bark of this natural barometer is as smooth and white as that of a sycamore, but with the near approach of storms these characteristics vanish like magic.

Twenty-four hours before a storm breaks over the little island the trunk of every tree of the species turns as black as ebony, save a few scattered patches of carmine, these latter markings being supposed to foretell great electrical disturbance. The leaves, too, which in their normal state hang laterally (as they do on all American trees), drop edgeways and tremble like things endowed with animal life and reason.

A Queer Animal of Madagascar.

One of the most peculiar members of the great family of the mammals is the aye-aye of Madagascar. In form it much resembles a squirrel, in size it is equal to a large cat, and it is so shy, stealthy and ghostlike in its movements that the natives think it is a kind of spirit and regard it with superstitious dread. It is related to the lemurs, but it differs from them in many points. Its most remarkable peculiarity consists in the middle finger of its hands, which, instead of resembling the others, is as Mr. Richard Lydekker says, "extremely thin and spiderlike." Living in the silent forests, the aye-aye possesses extraordinary acuteness of hearing and apparently can locate by the sounds it makes in the trunks of trees the wood-boring larva on which it feeds. Chiseling away the wood with its teeth, the aye-aye inserts its remarkable middle finger to fork out its victims.

Value of the Shilling in 1600.

We know that in Shakespeare's day, A. D. 1600, sixpence a day was a fortune for any workman, say the equivalent of £10 per annum. A century earlier, before the access to America was open to English explorers, one of the Ardens of Warwickshire left an annuity of 40 shillings per annum to a younger son, probably the poet's great-granduncle. Then if sixpence a day would now be the equivalent of 20 shillings a week then 40 shillings per annum would equate to £120 of present values.—Notes and Queries.

How Like a Man!

Mrs. Nocknoddle—Oh, Norris, if you would always be as good and gentle and kind as you are at this moment, how happy we might be!

Mr. Nocknoddle (losing his temper instantly and bellowing at the top of his voice)—Do you mean to say, madam, that I am not always as good and kind as I am at this moment?—Chicago Tribune.

Hope for the Future.

"Come, come!" cried the candidate's friend, "don't be disheartened so easily."

"But I'm sure to be beaten," replied the candidate dismissively.

"Nonsense! Let your motto be, 'He who runs and fights away, may live to run another day.'—Catholic Standard and Times.

Children sweeten labor, but they make misfortune more bitter. They increase the cares of life, but they mitigate the remembrance of death.—Bacon.

Paper possessing the transparency of glass is made in Paris from kelp and other seaweeds.

"I'm not blaming you. But you don't mean to say that you have any serious

BEFORE
THE GALE

BY COLIN S. COLLINS

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In his fury Bert Moore called the wrath of heaven down upon the Beaconsville Dramatic society, which alone seemed responsible for the misery which had overtaken him, and when he had exhausted his supply of anathemas he buried his face in his hands and reviewed the whole wretched business.

Bess Ainsworth and he had been engaged for a year when the Dramatic society was formed, and the pretty little cottage which was to be their home was almost paid for when "Lorna; or, Alone in New York," was produced at the Beaconsville Opera House before a large, cultured and appreciative audience, as the Weekly Clarion described it. Bess' vivacity and melodious voice, together with a faint trace of natural dramatic ability, had fairly captured the house. Again quoting The Weekly Clarion: "The role of Lor-

act. Trains to Morgan? Just one a day, and the runways had boarded that. Livery rig? A fierce storm had arisen, the first of the year, and the ploughman proprietor of the Palace stables refused to rent a team. Good horseflesh was not to be risked in the face of such a storm.

Bert was desperate. He rushed up the street, and the keen wind from the east struck him full in the face. With it came an idea—he would shake up the river to Morgan. The furious eastern gale would fairly carry him to his beloved.

Three hours later a strange figure, swathed in a fur coat edged with small icicles and hung with sleet, staggered into the Ashland hotel at Morgan.

"Is Miss Bess Ainsworth stopping here?" came to the clerk in gasping tones. The astonished man nodded.

"I want to see her right away."

He strode up to the parlor, and when Bess entered he stood shivering and haggard in the dim light.

"Bert"—she exclaimed, then stopped awkwardly.

He seized her hands.

"I had to come, Bess, to save you from a life you would hate. I've risked my life to do it, Bess, and you won't refuse to go back with me?"

She hesitated, then stretched out both hands.

"Bert, dear, I'm—glad—you came."

But it was not until they had been hurriedly married by the nearest justice and had taken apartments at a hotel far removed from the stopping place of the Empire Comedy company that Bess opened her heart to her husband.

"Oh, Bert, it wasn't at all what I expected! We had a rehearsal the first thing. The girls whispered and made fun of the way I read my lines. That horrid manager—I hugged me—Oh, Bert, don't look like that! I pulled right away from him, and I heard one of the men say that Burnside had found another easy mark. Now, what did he mean by that?"

"I'm sure I can't imagine," answered Bert, with well assumed innocence, but a few minutes later he asked in the most casual way whether she had given Burnside her money to take care of.

"Oh, no!" she replied. "Aunt told me to be sure to sew it in my underskirt pocket. I just lent him enough for our fare and to get his wardrobe out of the express office."

"Express office is good," murmured Bert under his breath, then aloud: "Never mind, little woman. We can afford to lose that ten times over. The gale saved my railroad fare, too, you know."

MIRRORS.

A historian has it that as early as four centuries before Christ metal mirrors were in such common use among the Romans that any maid-servant could have as many as she could hang at her girder, which probably accounts for the fact that they gradually fell into desuetude among ladies of the higher classes and led to the introduction of substitutes. It is hardly to be supposed, however, that it was this fact which induced some ingenious person so to cut and burnish the inside of drinking cups as to reflect the face of the drinker many times in a highly warning manner.

In addition to the small hand mirrors which it used to be the particular duty of some unfortunate young slave to hold before his mistress, there were panels of stone set in the walls and so highly polished as to serve as mirrors. It was this use of dark stone that first suggested the use of glass for reflecting purposes, which, according to Pliny, was first manufactured at the glass works of a gentleman named Sidon. Black glass was first used; afterward clear glass with black foil on the back replaced it. Pliny tells us all about this, and from this time on no mention is made of glass mirrors until the thirteenth century, when a Franciscan monk, Johannes Peckham, speaks of mirrors, not only of polished marble and steel, but also of glass covered with lead on the back.

Spelling a Joke.

That proverbial denseness attributed to the Englishman in the presence of a joke or a funny story was well exemplified in a yarn spun by Nat Goodwin. The actor said that while in England he was entertaining a party of London friends—especially clever fellows, too, as Englishmen go—in a cafe near the Duke of York's theater. Assuming a reckless and despondent air to the story, he said, "Well, boys, wine, women and song are ruining me, that's certain. I've got to reform. I'm going to begin at once, and in order to do so have decided to give up singing."

"'Twas an old joke," said Goodwin, "but I thought the Englishmen might think it was funny. But they never cracked a smile."

After Goodwin had gone to his hotel one of the party turned to a companion and said: "I say, it's funny about Goodwin, don't you know. If he wants to reform, why don't he stop drinking? Conceived ass, too, don't you know, for he really can't sing a little bit!"—New York Times.

Time for Business.

Pa—Has that young man who has been calling on you rather frequently of late any steady occupation?

Daughter—Oh, yes, pa. He's a traveling man.

Pa—Indeed! Well, please tell him when he calls again I'd like to have him attend strictly to business when the clock strikes 10.—Richmond Dispatch.

Poetry at Home.

"Poterter will discover me," said the poet.

"If it does," replied his wife, who was all tired out because they couldn't afford to keep a girl, "it will probably regret any time it wasted in doing so."

—Chicago Record-Herald.

Willie's Case.

"I think," she said, "that Willie gave me more trouble when he was little than all of my other children together."

"And what about him now?"

"Oh, I never worry about him now. Sometimes I get to fretting for fear some of the others may be working themselves to death, but Willie's all right. He has a political job."—Chicago Record-Herald.

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So MRS. F. E. BAKER,
of Calverton, Tex.,
—SAYS OF—

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ACCURACY
and SKILL

ARE THE THREE ESSENTIALS IN
COMPOUNDING
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